

HARK!

A NOVEL OF
THE 87TH PRECINCT

ED McBAIN

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Also by Ed McBain

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This is for my wife,

DRAGICA—

the very beginning of everything for me.

The city in these pages is imaginary.

The people, the places are all fictitious.

Only the police routine is based on
established investigatory technique.

1.

GLORIA KNEW THAT someone was in her apartment the moment she unlocked the door and entered. She was reaching into her tote bag when a man's voice said, "No, don't."

Her fingertips were an inch away from the steel butt of a .380 caliber Browning.

"Really," the voice said. "I wouldn't."

She closed the door behind her, reached for the switch to the right of the door jamb, and snapped on the lights.

He was sitting in an easy chair across the room, facing the entrance door. He was wearing gray slacks, black loafers, blue socks, and a matching dark blue, long-sleeved linen shirt. The throat of the shirt was unbuttoned two buttons down. The cuffs were rolled up on his forearms. There was a hearing aid in his right ear.

"Well, well," she said. "Look what the cat dragged in."

"Indeed," he said.

"Long time no see," she said.

"Bad penny," he said, and shrugged almost sadly.

It was the shrug that told her he was going to kill her. Well, maybe that and the gun in his right hand. Plus the silencer screwed onto the muzzle of the gun. And their history. She knew he was not one to forget their history.

"I'll give it all back," she said at once. "Whatever's left of it."

"And how much is that, Gloria?"

2.

NOW THAT IS WHAT I call a zaftig woman,” Monoghan said.

“How do you happen to know that expression?” Monroe asked.

“My first wife happened to be Jewish,” Monoghan said.

Monroe didn’t even know there’d *been* a first wife. Or that there was now a second wife. If in fact there was a second wife. The woman’s skirt had pulled back when she fell to the expensive Oriental carpet, exposing shapely thighs and legs, which, in concert with her ample breasts, justified the label Monoghan had just hung on her. She was indeed zaftig, some five feet nine inches tall, a woman of Amazonian proportions, albeit a dead one. The first bullet hole was just below her left breast. The second was a bit higher on her chest, and more to the middle, somewhere around the sternum. There were ugly blood stains around each bullet hole, larger stains in the weave of the thick carpet under her. The detectives seemed to be staring down at the wounds, but perhaps they were just admiring her breasts.

Today was Tuesday, the first day of June, the day after Memorial Day. The dead woman lying there at Monoghan’s feet looked to be in her mid-thirties, still young enough to be a mother, though not what anyone would call a young mother, which was the juiciest kind. Monroe’s thoughts were running pretty much along similar lines. He was wondering if the woman had been sexually compromised before someone thoughtlessly shot her. The idea was vaguely exciting in an instinctively primitive way, her lying all exposed like that, with even her panties showing.

Monoghan and Monroe were both wearing black, but not in mourning; this was merely the customary raiment of the Homicide Division. Their appearance here was mandatory in this city, but they would serve only in an advisory and supervisory capacity, whatever that meant; sometimes even they themselves didn’t know what their exact function was. They *did* know that the actual investigation of the crime would be handled by the detective squad that caught

3.

IT WOULD SEEM ODD that in this vast and bustling metropolis, in the mightiest nation on earth, a message from someone intent on mischief could enter a police station unchallenged. After the anthrax mailings—and what with Homeland Security and all—one might have thought that a barrier of screening machines would have been erected at the portals of every police station in the country. Nay.

In the good old days (ah, the good old days) whenever you were in trouble, you ran right into a police station, any police station, past the hanging green globes flanking the wooden entrance doors, and you rushed to the desk sergeant and yelled, “I’ve been raped!” “I’ve been robbed!” “I’ve been mugged!” and somebody would take care of you. Nowadays, there was a uniformed cop standing guard at the entrance, and he asked you to state your business and show some ID before he let you inside. This was still the big bad city and a great many choices were available to you. “I’ve been stabbed, I’ve been axed, I’ve been shot in the foot!” But he wouldn’t let you inside there unless he felt you had legitimate business with the police.

Well, a same-day, courier-service messenger certainly has legitimate business with the police if he’s delivering a letter. Besides, what are you supposed to do? Examine each and every letter in his pouch? Impossible. In fact, what you do is you say, “How goes it today, Mac?” and you let him in. Same way you let in the courier from Lightning Delivery yesterday, whom you also called “Mac” even though you didn’t know him from Adam.

Adam Fen was the return name on the letter the messenger carried to the muster desk at six-thirty that Wednesday morning, the second day of June. The letter was once again addressed to Detective Stephen Louis Carella. Sergeant Murchison asked an officer to take the letter upstairs.

Upstairs in the squadroom, Bob O’Brien shouldn’t have opened it because it wasn’t addressed to him, but he thought if a person used a same-day delivery service, there might be some urgency involved. Besides, the graveyard shift still

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May

And summer's lease hath all too short a date...

"Actually, that's kind of nice," Genero said.

"He's back, all right," Willis said.

"With more poetry, no less."

" 'The darling buds of May,' " Eileen said. "That's Shakespeare, isn't it?"

"Sure sounds like Shakespeare."

" 'The darling buds of May.' "

"But it's June already," Carella said.

"Just barely," Meyer said.

This was Thursday morning, the third day of June. The lieutenant had virtually double-teamed the squad because whenever the Deaf Man put in an appearance, his people all suddenly began behaving like Keystone Kops, and one could not be too careful lest disapprobation thunder down from the brassy skies above. The nine Shakespearean scholars grouped around Carella's desk were Carella himself, Meyer, Kling, Genero, Parker, Hawes, Willis, Brown, and Eileen Burke.

"Kind of nice, though," Genero said. " 'The darling buds of May,' you know? I really like that."

All the squadroom windows were open to the balmy breezes of early June. The note on Carella's desk was the first one delivered today. He felt sure there'd be more.

HE'S BACK TO spears again," Genero said.

The Deaf Man's first note that Friday morning, the fourth day of June, read:

Come on, come on; where is your boar-spear, man?

Fear you the boar, and go so unprovided?

"Or is he telling us he's just a bore?" Parker asked.

"Which he spelled wrong, by the way."

"Because, you want to know the truth, I think he *is* a bore. Him and his Shakespeare both."

"Never give critics a good line," Carella said.

Parker didn't know what he meant.

"Anyway, we don't know for sure that this one *is* Shakespeare," Kling said.

"Well," Eileen said, "he *told* us it was going to be Shakespeare from now on, didn't he? That's what he told us yesterday, am I right? That's what the *spear* and all those *shakes* were about yesterday."

She was inordinately proud of her deduction yesterday, and did not much like Kling shooting her down this way now. In her secret heart, she also felt he wouldn't be talking this way if they hadn't once shared a relationship. This was some kind of man-woman thing between them, she felt, and had nothing whatever to do with sound police work.

"Who else but Shakespeare would talk like that?" Carella asked.

"Right," Genero said. "Nobody but Shakespeare talks like that."

6.

MELISSA FIGURED THIS WAS what she usually did, anyway, except in reverse. Haggle over a price, that is. What usually happened, the john said, “Two hundred for the night,” and then you said “Five hundred.” He said “Three,” you said “Four.” You settled for three and a half and everybody was happy—especially you, if he fell asleep after the first go-round.

This was Saturday morning, the fifth day of June. Very *early* Saturday morning.

Before she left the apartment, Adam had given her five thousand bucks in hundreds. Five thousand dollars! Which didn’t seem like very much when you broke it down to a mere fifty \$100 bills, oh well.

“That’s your outside limit for the day,” he’d told her. “You get your people for less than that, whatever’s left over is yours, you can buy yourself that lingerie we were talking about.”

She had a better idea of what to buy with what was left over, but first she had to buy what she needed to make this work at all.

She figured, correctly as it turned out, that not too many people would be eager to take a letter into a police station. Not with the anthrax scare still a very much alive issue. Would’ve been different if any of the brilliant masterminds in Washington—some of them should meet Adam Fen, they wanted mastermind—knew what to do about it except stick their thumbs up their asses. As it was, the first three men she approached said flat out, “What are you, crazy?” This after she’d offered two hundred bucks just to carry a friggin letter inside a police station and hand it to the desk sergeant!

The next person she approached was in a coffee shop on Jefferson. Six in the morning, the girl sitting there drinking coffee was a working girl like herself, Melissa could spot them a hundred miles away. Black girl with hair bright as brass, nail polish a purple shade of Oklahoma Waitress. She’d had a hard night,

THE PHONE RANG at a little past nine that Sunday morning.

They were sleeping in Sharyn's apartment that night, and she always slept on the side of the bed closest to the phone because in this city you never knew when another cop would get shot, and the Deputy Chief Surgeon would have to respond.

Sharyn picked up the receiver and said, "Cooke here," and then listened, and said, "Where?" and listened again, and said, "I'm on the way," and hung up and threw back the covers and ran for the bathroom.

Kling was dressed before she was.

"I'll drive you," he said.

"You don't have to," she said.

"I want to," he said. "We'll get breakfast when you're finished there."

"My dollface," she said, and went to him and kissed him.

He drove them through a Mickey D's for coffee, and they started the drive to Majesta with the windows down and fresh morning breezes blowing through. There was very little traffic so early on a Sunday morning, and they made it over the bridge in ten minutes flat and were at Mount Pleasant in another ten. Mount Pleasant was one of the city's better hospitals. There'd be no need for Sharyn to arrange a transfer, but a cop had been badly cut trying to break up an early morning gang rumble outside St. Matthew's Church on Camden Boulevard, and she had to be here to make sure he'd get the best possible treatment.

That didn't explain why Dr. James Melvin Hudson was standing outside the main entrance to the hospital.

Kling suddenly remembered that this was where Dr. James Melvin Hudson

WELL, WELL, WELL, now what have we here?” Detective Oliver Wendell Weeks asked.

He was talking to the uniformed cops who’d called in what appeared to be a homicide at eight-fifteen this bright Monday morning, June 7, which was when Police Officers Mary Hannigan and Roger Bradley found what appeared to be a dead body on the sidewalk alongside what appeared to be a BMW sedan.

Long before the two officers happened across the stiff on their first circuit of Adam Sector during the first half-hour of the day shift, a great many other people had noticed it lying there on the sidewalk in a huge puddle of blood. All through the livelong night and early morning, these passersby glanced down at the body and hurried on along because, this neighborhood being what it was, nobody thought it prudent to report what sure as hell looked like a murder. Especially those good citizens who recognized the corpse as being the remains of one Ambrose Carter, an influential, what you might call, pimp.

Ollie recognized Carter the moment the ME rolled him over.

“Ambrose Carter, Pimp,” he announced, spreading his hands on the air and raising his voice to the world at large, but especially to the two Homicide cops who’d been sent over to lend authority to the vile goings-on up here in the Eight-Eight.

“I know all the girls in his stable,” Weeks said.

“Biblically, no doubt,” the ME commented drily.

“You think one of them might’ve aced him?” Muldoon asked.

“It’s been heard of,” Mulready said.

The two Homicide dicks were wearing black suits, black socks and shoes, black ties, white shirts, black snap brimmed fedoras. They looked like Tommy

IT WAS ALREADY one o'clock on Tuesday morning, the eighth day of June. Despite the light drizzle wetting the streets and dampening the libido, the stroll in Ho Alley had been underway since eleven or so last night.

There was a time when Ollie might have found these nocturnal adventures exciting...well, actually *had* found them exciting, never mind the “*might* have.” Half the girls out here looked like they were parading in their underwear. The other half were wearing skirts cut high on their thighs, some of them slit up the side to expose even more flesh, barelegged, with strapped stiletto-heel sandals or boots of the dominatrix variety, leather laces up the side. If you were a red-blooded American male, how could you *not* get excited?

Especially when these girls reeked of everything forbidden. He didn't mean just the casual blowjob; junior high school girls were giving those away free nowadays. He meant the very *concept* of Anything Goes. In a society becoming more and more restrictive, here on this five-block stretch of turf, everything was permitted. Anything imagined by the Great Whores of Babylon had been refined to perfection over the centuries and was now for sale in this outdoor bazaar where girls talked freely and seemingly without fear of arrest about such delicacies as the Moroccan Sip, and the Acapulco Ass Dip, and the Singapore Slide.

There ought to be a law, Ollie thought.

There *was*, in fact, a law, but you couldn't guess it existed on this street at this hour of the night. As short a time ago as only last month, Ollie would have found all these flashing legs and winking nipples and glossy wet lips...well...arousing. Even now, he felt a faint stirring in his groin, but he suspected that was a conditioned response and not anything generated by true desire. Or maybe it was because one of the girls had just grabbed his genitals and asked, “What you got here, Big Boy?”

“Nothing for you, honey,” he said.

THE WAY MELISSA understood this, there was this Greek violinist named Konstantinos Sallas, who was staying here at the Intercontinental Hotel with his wife, his violin, and his bodyguard. It was the bodyguard who interested Adam, the bodyguard who had information Adam needed, the bodyguard Adam wanted her to sleep with, if she had to, in order to gather this information.

Melissa had never slept with a bodyguard before.

Neither had she ever clasped *anyone* to her bosom, so to speak, with the express purpose of getting information from him. She felt a little bit like Mata Hari, especially wearing the black shoulder-length wig. Adding to this *femme fatale* image was a strappy little slinky little black silk shift Adam had bought for her that afternoon, on the assumption that she'd be coming back to the apartment, which of course she had.

It was now three minutes past midnight on the ninth day of June.

According to Adam, it was the bodyguard's habit to stop into the hotel bar for a glass or two of ouzo after he'd tucked in the violinist each night. Adam did not know the bodyguard's name—he had only observed him from a distance, here at the hotel and on his accompanying walks to the concert hall. But he gave Melissa a fairly good description of him, and she knew to expect a burly, bearded man some six feet four inches tall, barrel-chested and dressed entirely in black, including the black shirts and ties he wore with his black silk suits. He sounded less like a Greek bodyguard than one of the Hollywood agents she'd known on the Coast before she got busted that one time when she was but a mere slip of a girl just learning the trade, before Ambrose Carter taught her what it was really all about, girlfriend. She did not particularly enjoy sex with big hirsute men. But in anticipation of her share of the seven-figure payday, *whenever* that might come, *if* it ever came, she would have gone to bed with a gorilla.

So where the hell was he?

THE DRIVER FROM Regal Limousine was waiting outside 328 River Place South when his customer—a Mr. Adam Fen—came out of the luxury apartment building at precisely one-thirty that Wednesday afternoon. He tipped his peaked hat and immediately went to the curbside rear door, snapping it open, holding it open as his customer stepped in, and then closing the door behind him. Coming around to the driver’s side of the car, he climbed in behind the wheel, and said, “I’m David, Mr. Fen.”

“How do you do, David?”

“Nice day, i’n it, sir?”

Slight Cockney accent, the Deaf Man noticed. Or Australian, perhaps? Sometimes, they sounded alike. David was a man in his late forties, the Deaf Man guessed, some five-feet eight-inches tall, quite thin, a slight man by anyone’s reckoning. He was wearing black trousers and a matching jacket, black shoes and socks, little black cap with a shiny black peak, white shirt, and black tie.

“And where shall it be this afternoon, Mr. Fen?”

“Clarendon Hall, please.”

“Clarendon it is, sir.”

The Deaf Man had ordered what Regal called its “luxury sedan” because this was the type of limo Konstantinos Sallas and his bodyguard would be riding to Clarendon this Saturday afternoon. He was not at all interested in the backseat reading lamps or vanity mirrors or any of the other amenities, preferring instead to concentrate on how much room there was in the front seat, where David sat behind the wheel with a blank smile on his face.

The weapon the Deaf Man had chosen was an Uzi submachine gun.

HE HAD BEEN STANDING outside her building since eight this morning, but no sign of Miss (or possibly Mrs.) Lawson, Matthews, or Curtis. If she had a nine-to-five job, which was possible even though she'd met with Sharyn and her doctor boyfriend at a little before three on Tuesday, she'd be leaving for work sometime between eight and nine, was what he figured. But no sign of her yet.

A white girl, not her, came out of the building at eight-twenty, began walking off into what was shaping up as a sunny day, all that rain last night. Another white girl, again not the one he was looking for, came out at eight-thirty, and then a flurry of them a few minutes later, but still not his target. Was it possible she'd slept with the busy Dr. Hudson at his place last night? Nine o'clock, then nine-fifteen, and nine-thirty, no Lawson, Matthews, or Curtis. Maybe she'd over-slept. The mailman arrived at a quarter to ten. Kling followed him into the building.

"Detective Kling," he said, and flashed the buzzer. "Eighty-seventh Squad."

The mailman looked surprised.

"Social Security checks?" he asked.

"Something like that. Do you know any of these women by sight?" he said, and showed the three names.

"Lawson's not a woman," he said. "Man name of Charles. Charles Lawson."

"How about these other two? L. Matthews? J. Curtis?"

"Lorraine Matthews is a blonde. Around five-six, sort of stout..."

"And Curtis?"

"Julie, yeah. Julia Curtis. Around thirty, thirty-five, long black hair, brown eyes. Five-seven, five-eight. That the one you're looking for?"

THE ELEVENTH DAY of June dawned all too soon.

At six-thirty A.M. on what looked like the start of a sunny Friday morning, Melissa and the Deaf Man were sitting in the breakfast nook of his seventeenth-floor apartment, overlooking River Place South, Gleason Park, and the River Harb beyond.

“Your job tomorrow,” he was telling her, “will be a very simple one.”

She was thinking that her job *today* wouldn’t be a simple one at all. If she didn’t get out of here soon to start lining up her junkies...

“The luxury sedan from Regal will be arriving here at half past noon tomorrow,” he said. “All you have to do is deliver the driver to the Knowlton.”

So what else is new? she thought.

“And what will *you* be doing?” she asked.

Far as she could see, all he’d done so far was sit on his brilliant ass while she ran all over the city doing his errands. And he still hadn’t told her what her cut of the big seven-figure payoff would be, if there ever *was* a big payoff, which she was honestly beginning to doubt, now that he was into palindromes and all. If he was so intent on screwing up the 87th Precinct, why was he bothering with word games? Why didn’t he just lob a hand grenade through the front door? Good question, eh, Adam? What *is* this thing you have with them, anyway?

“What is this thing you have with them, anyway?” she asked, venturing the question out loud, what the hell.

“By this *thing*...?”

“This messing around with their heads.”

PREDICTING A BUSY night tonight—because in this city Saturday night was when all the loonies came out to howl—Byrnes assigned only a skeleton crew to the day shift. Arriving at 7:45 A.M. to start their eight-hour stint were Detectives Meyer, Parker, and Genero. Meyer might have wished for slicker partners, but Carella had a wedding to attend, and Hawes was off chasing whoever had tried to kill him twice, and Kling had called in sick, so he was stuck with these two.

The first message came fifteen minutes after they'd signed in. It was delivered by a Caucasian drug addict, aged eighteen, nineteen, in there. The sealed envelope was addressed to Carella.

"I thought we were through with this guy," Parker said.

"Apparently not," Meyer said, and called Carella at home. Carella was already up and having breakfast. The wedding was scheduled for noon.

"Want me to open it?" Meyer asked.

"Be my guest," Carella said.

There was a single note in the envelope. It read:

GO TO A PRECINT'S SHIT!

"He spelled *precinct* wrong," Genero said. "Didn't he?"

Meyer read the note to Carella, misspelling and all.

"He doesn't make spelling mistakes," Carella said.

"Unless he's quoting Shakespeare."

"This isn't Shakespeare."

IT WAS ALMOST twelve-thirty when Sharyn got back to the apartment. Kling was waiting for her, waiting to confront her. He'd known she was lying the moment she told him she was going to her office this morning. He knew the office in Rankin Plaza was closed on Saturdays, and he knew her private office on Ainsley Avenue was similarly closed. So while she was in the shower, he yelled to her that he was heading out, and then he went downstairs and waited for her to come out of the building. He then followed her not to Rankin and not to Ainsley but to a coffee shop on Belvedere and Ninth where who should be waiting for her but Dr. James Melvin Hudson himself in person.

Kling had watched them through the plate glass windows fronting the street.

Hudson leaning over the table.

Sharyn's head close to his.

Taking earnestly, seriously.

Taking her hands at one point.

Crying?

Was he *crying*?

Now, at three minutes to one, he waited for her in his own apartment, waited for the sound of her key in the latch, the key he had given her, waited to confront her.

He was sitting on the couch facing the entrance door. On one end of the couch was the small pillow she'd had needlepointed with the words:

Share

Help

IN THIS CITY, there are beginnings, and there are sometimes endings. And sometimes those endings aren't quite the ones imagined when you and I were young, Maggie, but who says they have to be? Where is it written that anyone ever promised you a rose garden? Where is it written?

"I understand someone sent you a note," Hawes said.

"I get notes all the time," Honey said.

"This note was an important one," he said.

They were in her apartment. The apartment on the seventeenth floor of the building where Eddie Cudahy had taken a potshot at him on Wednesday morning, the second day of June. *Several* potshots, in fact.

It was now three o'clock on the afternoon of the twelfth, ten days and some eight hours later, but who was counting? Hawes had already arrested, questioned, and booked Eddie Cudahy, but Honey Blair was still in her nightgown and peignoir, trying to look innocent when she knew exactly which note Hawes was talking about. He was talking about *the* Note.

DEAR HONEY:

PLEASE FORGIVE ME AS I DID NOT KNOW YOU WERE IN THAT AUTOMOBILE.

"According to a man named Eddie Cudahy," he said, "who works for Chann..."

"Yes, I know," she said.

"You know *him*...?"

"Vaguely."

Acknowledgments

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About the Author

IN 1998, ED MC BAIN WAS the first American to receive the Diamond Dagger, the British Crime Writers Association's highest award. He also holds the Mystery Writers of America's prestigious Grand Master Award. His most recent 87th Precinct novel was *The Frumious Bandersnatch*. Under his own name—Evan Hunter—he has enjoyed a writing career that has spanned five decades, from his first novel, *The Blackboard Jungle*, in 1954, to the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, to *Candyland*, written in tandem with his alter ego, Ed McBain, to *The Moment She Was Gone*, published in 2002.